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## Islamist Versus Islamist: Rising Challenge in Gaza

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## **Gaza Diversity Challenge: Islamism and politics**

“It’s good for Palestinians to be based on diversity ... We believe in freedom of thought”<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Islam’s diversity in the present is a historic legacy of schism and factionalism and a challenge to the original spirit of unity as outlined by its founder. Yet in the twenty-first century political Islam has been represented as more of a monolith than a spectrum of ideas and aspirations. Rivalry within Islam is problematic as it undermines the precedent notion of unity through communal belonging (*tawhid and ummah*). The materialization of new Islamist groups is hence a challenge to those who hold to unitary visions. In the Palestinian territory of the Hamas governed Gaza Strip the dominant Islamist actor is challenged internally by other Islamist elements. Gaza’s Islamists are also influenced by events across their border to the West where post-revolutionary Egypt has given rise to a veritable plethora of new Islamist actors vying for political space and power within the state. This article outlines the phenomenon of Hamas’s Islamist rivals and the consequences in terms of governance and legitimacy. It will focus on ideological and violent dispute and the means by which it has been combated by Hamas and its security elements.

### **Introduction**

Hamas’s Islamist and Islamic rivals are used to grabbing the headlines. Their violent attacks on Israel, kidnapping and killing of Westerners<sup>2</sup> have alerted many to the manifestation of a new phenomenon of salafi and jihadi-salafi Islam in Gaza. The leaders of such groups publicly laud al-Qaeda and predict that they are opening a new bridgehead in the global jihad in this over-crowded territory which is home to 1.6 million Palestinians many of whom are aid dependent. These Palestinians are getting by on international handouts because Israel and the West have imposed a siege regime on the area in the wake of Hamas’s election victory in January 2006. This has effectively closed Israel’s borders to Gaza in terms of a regular flow of goods into and out of the Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup> The leaders of the new radical groups live a shadowy life, hiding not only from the long arm of Israel’s counter-terrorist units but from Hamas’s formidable security and intelligence forces in the Gaza Strip. “Many of us have been imprisoned by Hamas. Their oppressive measures are still ongoing,” remarks one Salafi Jihad fighter.<sup>4</sup>

Their very presence and growing attraction highlights a pressure between the claim to ‘moderate’<sup>5</sup> nationalist Islamism epitomised by Hamas and the radical threat posed within Gaza by a new cohort of Islamists in their midst. Hamas’s Islamist opponents are multi-faceted both in terms of ideology and operational reach and threat. They undermine the claims of Hamas’s Islamist governance agenda. In turn Hamas has responded to this threat in a number of ways.

In this article the challenge that is presented by new Islamist elements in the Gaza Strip to Hamas will be outlined. This challenge lies in the ideological certainties that in the West has led to the characterisation of Hamas as radical, terroristic and violent and incapable of transformation into a moderate political movement. In this respect Hamas, as its leaders often claim, is the 'moderate' face of Islamism far more palatable than the Jihadi ideologues and their armed followers represented by salafi-jihadi insurgence in the Gaza Strip and the conditions of siege that the Palestinian population lives under. "When compared to other religious parties," warned Hamas leader Jamal Abu Hashem in January 2007, "[we] are a moderate movement ... I think US policy should not allow Hamas to go to or in the way of more radical parties in the region."<sup>6</sup> This moderate versus radical distinction, however, is largely unnoticed in the West though it preoccupies Islamists in the Middle East as they formulate localised responses to the Arab Spring and the decline of al-Qaeda.

The emergence and actions of radical Islamists in the Gaza Strip reflect this localised response to the altered political dynamic of the region and Islamists claims within them. They reflect the extent to which opposition elements better capture a constituency of desperation than the governing authorities of Hamas. They are a manifestation of the transformation that has taken place in Gaza since the Hamas electoral victory of January 2006 and their takeover and ousting of Fatah in June 2007, the Israeli assault of 2008-09 Operation Cast Lead, the Siege and the events of the Arab Spring and Islamist renaissance of 2010-11 led by the Ikhwan al-Muslimeen movement.<sup>7</sup> This transformation has been one where the Gaza Strip and constituencies of Islamism within it has experienced Western isolation and in response adopted a 'Look East' policy which emphasises ideological anti-Westernism, radicalism and jihadi discourses. The emergence of such groups takes place within a context of hopelessness, socio-economic crisis, and dependency locally. Regionally Gazans have watched in awe as their Arab brothers and sisters have toppled hitherto powerful state elites and begun to vote into power Islamist political parties and leaders. Some have begun to question whether their Hamas rulers are capable of democratic Islamist leadership and representation in terms of their aspirations for conflict resolution and self-determination. Others believe that the Hamas leadership has failed in its duty to engage in jihad to overthrow a pernicious occupation which has blighted the Palestinian territories since 1967. The latter tend to dwell among Hamas's most vociferous and formidable Islamist critics and have sought to challenge Hamas's credentials to rule in the name of Islam.

## **Upstarts**

In the late 1970s the Gaza Strip was the political preserve of Palestinian nationalists who were decidedly secular and leftist in orientation.<sup>8</sup> Nascent Islamism had been firmly suppressed in the late 1950s and mid 1960s when Gaza fell under the same repressive measures as the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo. President Nasser of Egypt threw Palestinian Islamists in jail and effectively closed them down. When Islamic *dawa* organisations were licensed by Israel as a foil to the secularists in the PLO they were largely considered a temporary nuisance of no real capacity or legitimacy. Dismissed as

a 'here today gone tomorrow' Islamist phenomenon the organizations that they founded nevertheless grew and won support for their clean credentials and ability to ideologically transform socio-economic discontent and nationalist longing into grievances that were manifested first at the Israeli ruling authorities and later at the Palestinian Authority dominated and controlled by the Fatah faction of the PLO. In many respects the emergence of the salafi and jihadi trend in Gaza has been treated by Hamas with the same degree of dismissal as their Fatah rivals treated them a generation earlier. They have both sought to play up (as a foil to their moderate claims) and play down (in terms of legitimacy challenges and security) the contentions that al-Qaeda and the salafi jihadis are present, active, supported and linked to regional networks of terror from the Gaza Strip.<sup>9</sup> Hamas's opponents have also claimed that since 2006 Gaza has been perceived as a place of opportunity for al-Qaeda and other jihadi-salafi groups. It has been contended that Palestine (and in this case the Gaza Strip) is a natural location for the jihadi ideology and agenda of al-Qaeda.

The Palestinian issue enjoys a centrality<sup>10</sup> among jihadi ideologues including Sayyid Qutb to Abdullah Azzam and Usama Bin Laden.<sup>11</sup> Palestine symbolises the pan-Islamic and transcendent jihadi call that has defined such ideologues in their writings and their strategic agendas. Al-Qaeda has attempted to re-define part of its *raison d'être* as a call to arms for the Palestinians, demanding that Israel's occupation be overthrown and that the territory it occupies be restored for perpetuity according to Islamic *waqf*. The slogan of the mujahedeen of Afghanistan in the 1980s that the road to Kabul led through Jerusalem has been repackaged by al-Qaeda in terms of a call to jihad in Palestine and Iraq as a duty (*fard ayn*) on Muslims and as part of anti-Western rhetoric.<sup>12</sup> Hence it is contended that there is logic to taking the opportunity of physically locating and manifesting an al-Qaeda presence in such territories. The increased prominence of certain salafi-jihadi elements in Gaza that identify with al-Qaeda also promote the fear for Israel and its allies that security at its southern border will be further impacted by such a presence.<sup>13</sup> This combines with strategic and security pressures that make Israel vulnerable on its northern border from a Hezbollah-Iranian axis and now to the south from new salafi-jihadi elements in addition to traditional concerns with Hamas. Hamas leaders and activists, however, have been prominent in denying that they sit as allies in the region with al-Qaeda or the other salafi jihadi elements that have emerged in Iraq, Yemen, the Maghreb and elsewhere. In fact Hamas has struggled to put ideological distance between itself and al-Qaeda and other salafi-jihadi elements. In part this is explicable by the political tightrope it has walked in terms of Islamist solidarity and populist appeal on the one hand and Israel's propaganda efforts on the other. The populist appeal rests on a foundation of Islamism as a growing regional force capable of political transformation of which Hamas is variously part of or even a vanguard element to. But within this foundation of Islamism in the mode of force also lies terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and their tactical resort to suicide bombings. As Reuter asserts, "however different their individual origins, programs, aims and politics are from each other, militant groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah and al-Qaeda are united in their exploitation of suicide attacks to hit their enemies where they are most vulnerable."<sup>14</sup>

### **Jihadi Firebrands and the 'Moderates' of Hamas**

When Hamas won the elections of 2006 there were fears in Israel and other Western capitals that their control of the Palestinian Authority would also mean the establishment of greater Islamic authority in the region and an opportunity for al-Qaeda to locate itself in the area. In the wake of 9/11 Hamas leadership tried to avoid being perceived as part of al-Qaeda's global jihad. Sheikh Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, declared, a day after the attack, that it was not part of al-Qaeda and that Hamas had no intention of becoming part of the greater jihad of the salafi-jihadists, "We in Hamas: our battle is on the Palestinian land. We are not ready to move our battle out of the occupied Palestinian territories."<sup>15</sup> Sheikh Yassin, together with many other major Islamist leaders also signed a declaration of condemnation of the attacks of 9/11 as "against all human and Islamic norms".<sup>16</sup> Israel's political leaders, however, underscored the similarities between Hamas and al-Qaeda, as jihadi firebrands, with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon informing US leaders that they faced their own Bin Laden like threat. Israel also warned against appeasing Islamists, "I call on the Western democracies, and primarily the leader of the free world, the United States: Do not repeat the dreadful mistake of 1938 when enlightened European democracies decided to sacrifice Czechoslovakia for a convenient temporary solution. Do not try to appease the Arabs at our expense ... Israel will fight terrorism."<sup>17</sup> For many in Israel it would only be a matter of time before al-Qaeda was manifest among the Palestinians.<sup>18</sup> Some US politicians also equated Palestinian organizations with al-Qaeda and alleged linkage to the 9/11 attacks through networks of terror. Others pointed out other motives for the purported linkage, "From what I know Israel has been using the Usama Bin Laden analogy to draw US support and they will probably do so more. But in reality I think the contacts are minimal", commented an Israeli expert on terrorism.<sup>19</sup> Recognising the difference in strategies between Hamas and al-Qaeda was problematic at a time when Hamas was defined by its infamous resort to suicide bombing attacks against Israeli targets. Ideological difference with respect to Hamas's leadership combining political and militarised tactics as well as populist appeals and those of al-Qaeda that eschewed such approaches was lost on most audiences.

Al Qaeda and Hamas, however, have recognised the differences between themselves. Hamas, in particular has ended up the target of al-Qaeda critique and attack. Al Qaeda and salafi-jihadis have excoriated the Hamas leadership and opposed them because of their political strategies and tactics of participation in the localised context of competition for control of the PA and sole leadership of the Palestinian issue. Here, as Yassin's own words attest, the jihadi struggle is bounded by the localised and territorialized borders of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Hamas had never taken its jihad beyond the borders of Israel and the Palestinian territories.<sup>20</sup> Hamas, unlike al-Qaeda and the salafi-jihadis does not advocate the overthrow of *jahilli* regimes but like their counterparts in the Muslim Brotherhood call for change and reform (its election 2006 slogan) within societies and resistance against the occupation by Israel of Palestinian territory. Hamas's earlier lexicon of jihad is today instead offered as resistance as part of a Palestinian national liberation movement. Al-Qaeda and the salafi jihadis have adopted a very different approach to jihad as global and transnational. The Hamas leadership has always promoted a gradualist approach – through policies of Islamization – to

societal and political change which in turn allows for tactics and strategies such as *hudna* (ceasefire) and (*tahdiya*) as well as participation in democratic secular processes such as elections to be practiced. Al-Qaeda and the jihadi-salafi reject and critique such approaches as capitulation to the erroneous policies and approaches of corrupted and *jahilli* regimes which in al-Qaeda's view are condemned as *kufir* and apostate.

In more recent years al-Qaeda's leaders have publicly denounced Hamas's action and approaches and thus have begun the inexorable categorization of the Hamas governing regime in Gaza and the wider Hamas movement as an anathema to them and the Islamist ideals that they represent. When Hamas announced in 2005 that it would participate in Palestinian municipal and legislative elections on the Change and Reform slate Al-Qaeda's Deputy Ayman al Zawahiri attacked the decision and became a major critic of the movement. For such jihadis Hamas participation would do nothing to liberate "a grain of Palestinian land, but will choke the jihad," and ultimately lead Hamas to failure in their commitment to usurp Israel through this Islamic duty.<sup>21</sup> In this respect al-Qaeda contested Hamas legitimacy in the realm of governance and jihad against Israel and claimed it was faulted. When Hamas entered into a national unity government agreement with Fatah in February 2007 it again drew the ire of al-Qaeda. But this time Hamas was vehement in responding to accusations against it, "Hamas did not forfeit its principles," declared Sheikh Hamed Beitawi head of the Palestine Scholars Association. "We retain the right to resist the occupation – this is a right enshrined in faith and law."<sup>22</sup> The issue is though whether the salafi-jihadi message championed by al-Qaeda has found appeal in the Gaza Strip amongst the very many hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who sit poor and dispossessed by Israel's occupation and the apparent indifference or double standards of the Western world.

This has been the real challenge between Hamas and al-Qaeda and its salafi-jihadi opponents in the Gaza Strip: whose Islamist message resonates more strongly? Has al-Qaeda's oratory to the Palestinian people and about their issue translated into a growing appeal for the movement on the ground? Has the growing permeability of Gaza's borders since the imposition of Israel's siege (and the burgeoning of illegal tunnels from Egypt) and the ousting of Mubarak made Gaza a destination of choice for foreign jihadis who find a 'welcome committee' of local like-minded activists? Or has Gaza remained immune from the transnational global jihadist discourse of the past decade? Have Hamas and its PLO rivals been sufficient in suppressing nascent jihadi-salafism in their midst to prevent such a phenomenon arising? Have the upstarts been defeated?

### **Meeting the Challenge in Gaza**

It is claimed that Hamas, aided by Tehran on the one hand and a popular mandate on the other, had by June 2007, emerged as the singular most well-armed and organised group in the Sunni milieu as well as the Gaza Strip. Hamas had not only succeeded in defeating its enemies in Fatah at the ballot box but through command of its rapidly expanding armed forces and accompanying security infrastructure. It commanded a large popular movement as well as entered government to control the levers of power

within the Palestinian Authority.<sup>23</sup> Hamas's reputation for pragmatism and its strategic employment of violence contrasted with the maximalist and perceived limitless violence of al-Qaeda and the jihadi-salafi.

Jihadi-Salafi allegedly arose amidst the chaos of internecine strife and bloodshed between Fatah and Hamas, and clans and families in Gaza 2006-2007. In part their voice became more prominent because al-Qaeda and other salafi-jihadis openly criticised Hamas for not only participating in the 2006 elections but its assumption of governing powers throughout the Gaza Strip. The assumption of governing powers grew some of the fiercest complaints because Hamas was perceived as failing to implement a strictly enforced government based on Shari'a. While Israel and its supporters lamented that Gaza under Hamas rule would devolve into an Islamic Emirate or 'Hamastan',<sup>24</sup> others on the salafi-jihadi spectrum believed Hamas was not Islamic enough. The jihadi-salafi also emerged in a highly dangerous and lawless environment where the monopoly of force which the Palestinian Authority had potential to employ was simply not adequately realised.<sup>25</sup>

The demands came in a changed political environment, one where in Gaza the worst nightmares of Israel, its allies and the Fatah faction of the PLO were being realised. Palestinian voters had turned their back on decades of corrupt and nepotistic Fatah rule, peace negotiations with Israel that failed to deliver peace and ever worsening (rather than improved) socio-economic conditions under continued Israeli occupation. Gazans had convinced themselves that they were empowered; Israel quit in the summer of 2005 (and Islamists claimed victory), they overturned Fatah control through the ballot box in both municipal and legislative elections but they elected an opposition group with no experience of governance to lead them. As Islamists Hamas drew the ire of its enemies and the fears of everyone as it plunged into violent attacks against its Palestinian counterparts. From this point the 'red lines' which many Palestinian said would never be crossed – in terms of Palestinian on Palestinian violence – were violated. Hamas, like Fatah, were ruthlessly determined to exercise power in Gaza. Hamas, as a governing power also had to deal with pragmatic politics both internally and in terms of Israel and pursuit of the resistance option through the firing of rockets. When Fatah had controlled Gaza Hamas had vociferously berated them for entering into ceasefire agreements with Israel that involved them actively policing against Hamas and other factions launching rockets from areas of northern Gaza. After 2007, however, the tables were turned on Hamas as it too announced unilateral "calms" (*tahdiya*) to prevent rocket fire from Gaza to Israel. Hence Hamas control came at a price in terms of populist Islamist messages about resistance and jihad. "We in Gaza live under the gun", remarked a bearded former Hamas supporter in Shatti refugee camp, "we are under the control of the guns of Israel and Hamas. I am talking to you but if someone hears me saying these things I'll be arrested ... in the past Hamas used to fire the rockets and called the PA collaborators for agreeing to *tahdiya* with Israel ... but now Hamas has accepted the *hudna* (ceasefire). Are we to blame them and tell them they are collaborators?"<sup>26</sup> Hamas, aware of the accusations, defended themselves. "We are not throwing away our weapons or giving up resistance," stated Hamas legislator Mushir al-Masri, "Hamas has not given up Palestinian rights and the difference between us and

Fatah on this is like the one between the earth and the sky ... They were deputies of the occupation ... Hamas will not cooperate with the occupation.”<sup>27</sup> The rhetoric was strong but did not necessarily convince the intended audience.

Increasingly Hamas’s Islamist agenda was also viewed as subject to its own sophistry while at the same time it has extended a monopoly of control of the Gaza Strip’s Islamic spaces. Mosques and *tabligh wa dawa* through extensive links into preaching and education have been placed under Hamas’s governmental monopoly and squeezed the religious space for other Islamist actors.<sup>28</sup> Dissent focuses on such issues and the transformation which Hamas has undergone since it was elected to power in 2006. Dissenters within the salafi and jihadi fold focus on this power dynamic and its consequences either in terms of denouncing the political, “we believe Hamas is not going in the right direction of mixing politics with religion,” or its localised rather than global jihad agenda in resisting Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands, “to us what they call violence is resistance. We will act in any direction that spites the Israeli occupation.”<sup>29</sup> Hamas’s Islamist opponents are hence represented in the traditional salafi of Gaza as well as the newly emergent salafi-jihadis, some of whom claim allegiance to and support of al-Qaeda. Alongside remains the Islamic Jihad faction whose leader in exile remains Ramadan Shallah and elements of the Hizbt Tahrir.

### **Fundamentalist: Traditional salafists**

*‘Will the sons of Jihad Salafi who accused Hamas of apostasy apologise now?’<sup>30</sup>*

Since the late 1970s Islamic fundamentalist inspired groups have been based in the Gaza Strip and included what are commonly referred to as the traditional salafists. The main locales for such elements have been Rafah and Khan Younis. They have a presence which casts a powerful Islamist influence over society. They are also accused of attacking shops and businesses engaged in practices considered ‘un-Islamic’. In this respect they can be considered to be an indigenous manifestation of contemporary Islamism in the Palestinian territories rather than an al-Qaeda like import. Salafi groups are, as the quote above highlights, perceived as hostile to Hamas. Some Hamas leaders consider them supporters of the opposition Fatah faction because of their fealty to the established governing power. The traditional salafists have always sought to address themselves to the Palestinian issue. “We began calling for a salafi curriculum ... sermons, lessons and direct contact with the people ... we do not refer to ourselves as a party or a movement,” claims leading salafi cleric Sheikh Yassin al-Astal.<sup>31</sup> Traditional salafi elements always eschewed political participation maintaining a powerful profile in society through its preaching and propagation activity including those encouraging virtue and prohibiting vice.

By 2007, however, some traditional salafi elements came to prominence as a result of a number of incidents and issues attributed to them. Such incidents include threats and subsequent attack on an UNRWA school in Rafah during a graduation ceremony because, it was alleged, it was not gender segregated and allowed for the “mixing of the



sexes". In this case, on 6 May 2007 a Salafi group held a demonstration at the school and in subsequent events a shooting incident took place. The gun and homemade bomb attack on the UNRWA school began with a protest by the Salafi who said the event was un-Islamic. One protester's sign said the U.N. "is turning schools into nightclubs." Protesters also accused an UNRWA official in Gaza, who was in the school, of leading a movement to weaken people's Islamic faith. The group of protesters tried to enter the school and Palestinian security officers fired in the air to keep them away. In the ensuing chaos, at least one homemade bomb was thrown into the school. A gun battle followed.<sup>32</sup> The attack in Rafah appeared to be carried out by the same Salafi elements behind a string of bombings of Internet cafes and pool halls in Gaza, claimed Palestinians. There were also fears at the time that such elements had perpetrated attacks on men and women accused by the group of so-called 'moral crimes'. They are also referred to as the 'Mujahedeen of Rafah' and have been accused on mounting attacks on the Rafah crossing area in order to provoke some form of Israeli incursion.<sup>33</sup>

Salafi leaders outlined the following views. These views represent some of the apparent contradictions inherent between the thought and practice of Palestinian Salafi elements, including their views on leadership, authority, and confrontation. "Salafi follow the ways of Prophet Mohammad and Salafi have all the respect for the ruler. They are realistic: Israel is a reality and Palestinians are incapable of waging a war," said one leader.<sup>34</sup> Salafi elements revere authority in a traditional *Sunni* fashion – to the extent that they will tolerate authoritarianism to avoid chaos (*fitna*). This is why some Hamas leaders dismiss such elements as "Fatah supporters". Some Salafi leaders concur with such a view, "We consider Abu Mazen our leader and of Palestinian society. We will never rise against him. We don't have Hamas members in our group like the jihadi salafists. We are transparent and known to the whole community as *dawa*."<sup>35</sup> As one leader asserts "salafi are implementing the call of the Prophets. President Abbas is a Muslim and a respected leader as long as he has not demonstrated any heretical behaviour." Returning Palestinian society to the 'straight path of Islam' is the key framework from which the Salafi operate: "a ruler is the one in charge of changing the situation of the people. The Palestinian President is the one responsible for his people and for his nation ..."<sup>36</sup>

By late 2007 some traditional salafi leaders barely concealed their antipathies towards Hamas for its takeover over the Gaza Strip from Fatah. "The coup in Gaza has nothing to do with religious beliefs. Killing people in the name of God is a crime. Hamas is a political party with a military wing, that lacks comprehensive understanding ... It took Islam as a cover for its actions ... It is a political party that has achieved only on the social level ... It should have never gotten to the Authority because it is not ready for such a role ... It should recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.. True Islam bans inter-fighting (*fitna*)... and the Salafi criticize the criminal acts of Hamas in Gaza."<sup>37</sup> Here the traditional salafi began to echo or reflect a similar Islamist antipathy to al-Qaeda in its 'principled' opposition to the Hamas takeover as well. Moreover the 'spiritual' leaders of the traditional salafi elements stated that they disdained violence or armed attacks unless permitted for the following 3 reasons: 'In Islam ... you are allowed to kill in three cases: 1. In punishment for crimes committed by citizens and in this case only the ruler can carry out this punishment, 2. to punish those

individuals who commit adultery, 3. to punish a Muslim who converts from Islam to another belief. No civilian should take the responsibility of punishing others. Hence Hamas in [our] view has committed crimes through its coup in Gaza.”

The leaders said they opposed inter-factional fighting to avoid (chaos) *fitna*. “What happened in Gaza is a crime because people were killed in the name of God.” Traditional salafists also warned that the political path pursued by Hamas would dilute its Islamist credentials, “the goal was to get the Islamists to follow the secular Fatah's approval of the international resolutions on Palestine. All those resolutions recognized the Israeli entity in Palestine, and so, the Palestinian state is limited to the part that has been occupied in 1967. All the Palestinian factions accepted that proposal except for Islamic Jihad and the PFLP, who refused it partially.”<sup>38</sup> Hence for traditional salafi Hamas had crossed the Rubicon in accepting – through political participation – a non-Islamist solution to the conflict with Israel.

From 2007 onwards the traditional salafi of Gaza grew in appeal and support but their armed elements remained clandestine for fear of reprisal from Israel and Hamas. The leadership of traditional salafi eschew any link or relation with al-Qaeda. “The Takfiris and the Jihadis are a minority in the Salafi,” stated one leader. Moreover the leadership acknowledged that they sent their “shebab” to “the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in order to distance them from the Takfiri trend. These trips and courses in religious belief are funded by rich scholars from among the Salafi Movement in Saudi Arabia.” Indeed historically the traditional salafi leadership and its followers in the Gaza Strip have followed Saudi inspired wahabbi salafi principles and likewise have echoed the Saudi regimes repudiation of al-Qaeda.

Some traditional salafi clearly remain opposed to Hamas who they claim ignore the spiritual aspects of society. Fatah is not seen by such leaders as a threat in the way that Hamas is. It is dismissed as, “neither ideological in nature nor spiritual. They have Communists and Christians under their umbrella.” Sheikh Sa’ad Sharaf a leader in the Sufi trend in the West Bank contended though that, salafi were supporting Fatah against Hamas because “they want to spread their thought in order to dominate mosques ... they use Fatah to reach their religious goals. The relationship [between] Fatah and salafi are only to serve mutual interests. Fatah does not have any religious dimension... just a national one... hence it serves Fatah to have the Salafi talk religion in their name.”<sup>39</sup> To what extent these words are prophesy is difficult to measure. Firstly such statements demonstrate further the innate rivalry between the various elements (armed and unarmed) of the Palestinian Islamic movement and potential for confrontation and conflict. Furthermore one might argue that Fatah’s policy of encouraging the salafi as a religious foil to Hamas was potentially dangerous. Many in the Sufi movement support and back the PA also as a foil to Hamas and the salafi. They claim that “Hamas has banned Sufis from talking in the name of religion ... On the other hand, Sufism, wants to work for Fatah, which does not have any religious dimension in order to combat Hamas whose thoughts coincide with the salafi thought.”<sup>40</sup> The traditional salafi remain a potential threat to Hamas governance of Gaza with respect to the ‘Islamization’ of Palestinian society – they are prepared to use force of arms to ensure “compliance”

from the local community in Gaza and this is a challenge to Hamas's much vaunted law and order agenda which it monopolizes. Hence the traditional salafists continue to promote Islamization based on fundamentalist strictures regarding piety and the organization of society. They maintain a grassroots presence, concentrated in particular areas, throughout the Gaza Strip which remains an inherent challenge to Hamas and its own Islamization agenda.

### **Jaljalat and the Jihadi phenomenon**

The jihadi phenomenon in Gaza is not new. In the late 1970s and early 1980s as Islamic resurgence transformed the Middle East, in Gaza, as in other locations there arose ideologues and nascent groups tied to the jihadi agenda inspired by radical thinkers.<sup>41</sup> These groups distinguished themselves from Hamas for a variety of reasons including ideological. The vanguardist and oppositional nature of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) brought it into tension and occasional conflict with Hamas – particularly with respect to resistance against Israel versus the promotion of populist Islamization agendas. Hence the Islamist spectrum in the Gaza Strip has always contained a radical element that has contrasted with the reformist and conservative ideas and approaches of Hamas and religious elements within the Fatah organization.

The innovation of the salafi-jihadi newcomers perhaps lies with respect to their embrace of global jihadism and its application to the Palestinian context. To a certain extent this inverts the jihadi thinking of PIJ and yet unifies ranks in terms of opposing Hamas's stance in government. The context in which these groups have arisen reflects this ongoing power struggle within the Palestinian milieu and incorporates the debilitating state of divide which emerged between Fatah and Hamas after January 2006. The new salafi-jihadis emerged, cell-like and small in number, armed and connected to powerful local clan and family networks amidst this contest of power and lawlessness of Gaza during this period.

They include groups such as *Jund Ansar Allah* (Soldiers of God's Compassion), *Jaysh al-Islam* (Army of Islam), "Jaysh Tawheed wa Jihad (Army of Unity and Jihad), the Doghmush family groups, *Jund Allah* (God's Soldiers) Popular Resistance Committee [elements] and Jaysh Arafat as-Sunnah and Jaysh Ansar as-Sunnah."<sup>42</sup> Both Hamas and Israel refer to the groups collectively as Jaljalat (Rolling Thunder). They are also commonly referred to in Gaza as the "young zealots". The most prominent of these groups is *Jund Ansar Allah* (Soldiers of God's Compassion); *Jaysh Al-Islam* (Army of Islam); and *Jaysh Tawheed wa Jihad* (Army of Unity and Jihad). The groups are amorphous, dynamic and can disappear as quickly as they rise up.

Such groups are allegedly responsible for the organization of attacks against Israel including rocket attacks, attempted kidnappings and assassinations, hostage taking of foreigners including journalists, NGO workers and activists. Internally they have organised strikes and raids and attacks on local businesses and individuals in Gaza who they consider engaged in immoral or apostate activities, such as internet cafe owners, video shops, cafes where men and women formerly used to socialise,

pharmacists and males working in women's hair salons. As one internet cafe owner recounted, "The *Jaysh Al-Islam* attacked my shop and trashed the place ... according to the Government [ Hamas ] they know these elements but I am afraid to file a complaint ... this is a totalitarian society we live in and Hamas won't dare stop those guys who declare they act in the name of Islam."<sup>43</sup> The groups, as the internet cafe owner highlights, represent a threat to the Hamas government and its monopoly of force within Gaza and in deciding how to pursue the resistance against Israel. Unlike Fatah and the leftist PLO faction which Hamas could outbid in terms of Islamic symbolism, the new groups claim to be the fundamentalist and true Islamist alternative, "We deal with a pure and undiluted Islam", states one salafi-jihadi leader. The ideology that these groups claim to represent has challenged the legitimacy of Hamas in terms of the wider Islamist project, its orientation and strategies for achieving common goals.

*Jund Ansar Allah* has emerged as a prominent challenger to Hamas's legitimacy claims. They echo al-Qaeda's Zawahiri in critiquing Hamas for its ceasefire agreements with Israel and its 'policing' to prevent other factions from launching attacks on Israel. The group has launched its own attacks against Israeli and Palestinian targets. Propaganda on its websites and through the local distribution of communiqués in Gaza has focussed on berating the Hamas government and its local security forces for constraining and restricting its activities and failing to implement Shari 'a law under their rule.<sup>44</sup> The challenge to Hamas came to a head in August 2009 in the southern city of Rafah where the group's leader Abdel-Latif Mousa and his followers made a unilateral declaration of Islamic Statehood. As Mousa preached to the congregation in the somewhat appositely named Ibn Taymiyyah mosque in Rafah Hamas dispatched security forces to put the putsch against them down. Hamas security forces killed Mousa and 11 others, and organised an arrest campaign to eradicate the group. Despite the claims that the group "essentially ceased to exist" in the wake of 2009 its leader in December 2011 contradicted its demise and claimed that the group was active and "To us ideology and blood are one and the same thing. Our leader Abdel Latif Mousa, who was killed in Rafah by Hamas, continues to be our guide and leader. We are still present and active."<sup>45</sup>

Jaysh Al-Islam, although formerly aligned to Hamas, and believed to be part of the elements that kidnapped BBC journalist Alan Johnston and Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, are part of the *Jaljalat* umbrella in terms of both embracing al-Qaeda like jihadi approaches as well as opposing Hamas. They first came to public attention in Gaza in May 2006. They declared, in a widely distributed communiqué that:

We are not waging jihad for the sake of [recovering] a plot of land, illusory frontiers or nationalism ... Our jihad is much loftier, ... This religion will not be able to triumph through a generation made rotten by [earthly] pleasures or broken by the security services of tyrannical governments ... Our jihad is based on a solid foundation and aims to end occupation and tyranny as a prelude to the establishment of an Islamic caliphate ...<sup>46</sup>

Israeli intelligence sources at the time asserted that the group was part of or linked to al-Qaeda. In Gaza many other local security and intelligence sources asserted that the group was not linked to al-Qaeda but was a "front for elements using the label of Islam

to conduct their business.”<sup>47</sup> It was a poorly concealed secret that certain elements of the Doghmush family were prominent within the Army of Islam.<sup>48</sup>

In 2007 the Army of Islam kidnapped the BBC correspondent Alan Johnston. On June 25, 2007 a video was released by Army of Islam showing Johnston with an explosive belt around his waist, with a demand for the release of Muslim prisoner and global jihadist leader Abu Qatada from British custody. On July 4, 2007, after Hamas arrested several members of Army of Islam including its spokesman, Alan Johnston was handed over to Hamas and released. The Army of Islam, however, is perceived as still representing a threat to Israel and may have sought, in the wake of its fall-out with Hamas, to strengthen ties with external radical Islamist elements such as al-Qaeda affiliates. Hamas, however, are unlikely to truly tolerate the manifestation of such a group for much longer. It has already succeeded in forging further disarmament deals which go some way to dissipating the group and the family behind it. Yet by the winter of 2011 the group was still functioning, its operatives killed by Israel and it was believed to be behind rocket launches to Israel’s southern cities. Egyptian officials blamed the group for suicide bomb attacks against churches in Alexandria and in May 2011 the US government designated it a foreign terrorist organization.<sup>49</sup>

Many analysts are agreed that the salafi-jihadi elements represented by Jaljalat do not represent a significant threat to Hamas’s monopoly of force as governing power in Gaza. The ideological challenge it does pose, however, reflects the changes within Islamism in the Middle East since the outbreak of the Arab Spring and the declining fortunes of al-Qaeda and western responses. As more and more elements of the Muslim Brotherhood, accede to power and governance, they will face the same challenges that Hamas does from its internal Islamist critiques. In Gaza this internal critique is emphasised with respect to Israel’s continued siege of Gaza and official international isolationism. It is ameliorated in part by the ‘opening’ up of Gaza to Egypt in the wake of Mubarak’s ousting. But it has also made Gaza and the Hamas authorities vulnerable to salafi-jihadi ambitions and access externally as well as internally. There is an attraction to the message of the salafi-jihadis among Gaza’s young population, disaffected Hamas members who reside on the radical end of the Islamist spectrum, as well as isolated or marginalised former militants from other Palestinian factions. As demonstrated the salafi, salafi-jihadis can also count of powerful family and clan networks and particular geographic districts of the Gaza Strip where Hamas’s reach is weaker than it would like.

## **The Phantom of global jihad**

“Al-Qaeda is coming whether Hamas like it or not!

Hamas, as this article has demonstrated, has historically demonstrated an intrinsic interest in preventing any manifestation of al-Qaeda in the Gaza Strip or attempts to conflate its programme with those of salafi-jihadis engaged in a global war on apostate regimes in the region and the West. To do this it must repress manifestations of radical Islamism in its midst. Thus even though al-Qaeda has not succeeded in gaining a

foothold in Gaza the vigilance of Hamas extends to the policing of those local Islamist elements that embrace the agenda, goals or aspirations of the al-Qaeda network. Jihadi-salafi, aware of Hamas's fear, draws on such sources as a form of developing a challenge and threat to Hamas's power. Leaders of the salafi-jihadi groups acknowledge the influence of important jihadi ideologues including traditionalists such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Sayyid Qutb, Azzam Abdulllah Azzam, Ayman Zawahiri and Abu Mohammed al-Maqdissi. "Each knows the important and urgency of the jihad and its message for the followers of Islam", claims one salafi-jihadi. Indeed the Army of Islam, while holding kidnapped journalist Alan Johnston along with demanding the release of Abu Qatada from british custody also called for the release of al-Maqdissi from a Jordanian prison. Maqdissi appears with other well-known salafi-jihadi scholars to urge support for their brother's in Gaza on their websites and propaganda.<sup>50</sup> Hamas's secular Palestinian national opponents in Fatah including Palestinian President Abbas also accuse them of failing to prevent al-Qaeda infiltration into the Gaza Strip. The President and his Fatah followers were ousted from Gaza in a humiliating takeover by Hamas. In the proceeding war of words Fatah leaders regularly accuse Hamas of allowing al-Qaeda into Gaza or of supporting it. "What did they do when Bin Laden was killed?" asked a Fatah Executive Committee member. "Haniyeh went on TV and said 'We condemn the murder of this Arab and Muslim Holy warrior.'<sup>51</sup> Fears of al-Qaeda infiltration have increased since the collapse of Mubarak's regime in Egypt and the deterioration of security coordination between Israel and Egypt in the Sinai. Hamas continues to deny all speculation of an al-Qaeda presence and attacks on Israel launched from Gaza under its control.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that Gaza's Islamist environment is proliferating. The successes of fellow Muslim Brother and Salafi Islamists in neighbouring Egypt is an encouragement both to Hamas and its local jihadi-salafi rivals. Their successes are not merely about the dividend of participating in elections and achieving power but the wider Islamist milieu which has emerged in the wake of the Arab Spring. This is better news for Hamas and its links to the Muslim Brotherhood than the jihadi salafists of Gaza who have seen declining currency of the message of al-Qaeda. Such circumstances may embolden Hamas to engage in further repressive policies against its Islamists opponents. Its leaders, unlike the Ikhwan of Egypt, are not presently inclined into pacts or power-sharing arrangements with salafi, jihadis, or a combination of the both. Traditional salafists are described by Hamas leaders such as Yahya Mousa as "Fatah supporters" and dismissed for any potential to challenge the Islamist hegemony of power the Hamas has become in Gaza.<sup>53</sup> Salafi-jihadists are similarly regarded and dismissed – as weak in numbers and too diffuse to present a serious challenge. Such charges are strongly refuted, "Jaysh al Ummah Tawhid wa Jihad, the Doghmush groups, Popular Resistance Committees groups are all our allies. Others like Jaysh Arafat as-Sunnah and Jaysh Ansar as-Sunnah cooperate with us as well ..., states one jihadi leader in Gaza. "Numbers are not important because we are respected and felt in this religious atmosphere that is tainted with poverty and siege."<sup>54</sup> Other jihadists, including

Palestinian Islamic Jihad, are still regarded as nothing other than an excuse for some Hamas leaders to demonstrate the movement's tolerance. "They are living in the field of thoughts," asserts Mahmoud Zahar<sup>55</sup>. Hamas deputy Prime Minister Dr Awad contends further that dealing with the salafists is a very different challenge than dealing with other Islamists, "they are organizationally weak – they are just capitalising on the immediate reality and will not necessarily endure ..." <sup>56</sup> Such comments point to the frustration which the jihadis, salafi and jihadi-salafi express and represent in terms of Gaza's wider population. They are critical, where many others fear to be because of repression, are Hamas' style of governing, and its strategic position in terms of issues such as the negotiation with Israel of the prisoner release in return for Gilad Shalit, the pursuit of National Reconciliation with Fatah to end the State of Divide, and the ceasefire with Israel concluded during Operation Cast Lead in January 2009. While Hamas may believe it has been successful simply by enduring in power and governing Gaza since 2007 its Islamist critiques see the movement as a capitulator, of renegotiating the principle of resistance through sophistry that betrays the Palestinian cause and leave Gaza's population under Siege from Israel and boycott by most western states.

They, like Hamas, interpret a lot from the events that have shaken the wider region since December 2010. They see opportunity, should they wish to take it in a salafi political path (as Salafists in Egypt have done). At present Salafi-Jihadi leaders are content to approve of events in Egypt rather than propose the same route for themselves. "We were very pleased when the salafi won in Egypt ... But I don't think that we want to engage in elections ourselves. We don't believe in elections as they are destructive for Hamas and we don't recognise Fatah. We will not engage. We will always continue our resistance and we do not recognise the hudna," asserts one rising star of a Gaza-based group.<sup>57</sup> Their grievances against the Hamas authorities remain, particularly with respect to what they see as their right to pursue armed resistance (jihad) against Israel and the imprisonment by Hamas of some of their leaders. They complain of having to act and live like "wanted men" in a society purportedly of Muslim hue and pretention. Their discontent, when tied to grievances about poverty, and lack of political progress in the conflict with Israel, finds growing support – not only among defectors from Hamas's armed wing of the Izz-a-din al-Qassam Brigades but among the many young Gazans who chafe at Hamas's institutionalization and the opportunities for clientalism that have arisen. Hamas's hegemonic Islamist claims are being challenged internally and encouraged as its counterparts in Egypt in the Muslim Brotherhood find themselves in a similar predicament following the opening of the political process to a diverse array of political forces including a multiplicity of Islamists. The challenge for Hamas, like other political actors, is how to manage the 'other' Islamists who are unwilling to serve under them.

The salafi, jihadis and salafi-jihadis represent pocket-like constituencies in the Gaza Strip but their Islamist claims, like those of their Hamas rivals, address wider concerns which address the Palestinian predicament and conflict with Israel. These concerns lay with the direction of resistance (which Hamas has altered), the issue of a continuing jihad, recognition of Israel, Palestinian internal reconciliation issues, democracy and elections, Islamism in the wake of the Arab Spring and the changed power-balances in the wider Middle East region. In this respect the fundamental potency of the Islamist

opponents of Hamas lies in the overlap between their specific ideological perspective and the conditions under which ordinary Gazans live. It is within the ideology of global jihadism that a constructed sense of Palestinian empowerment can be generated at a time when other Palestinian political perspectives point to emasculation. The ideas find tangible expression in attacks on Israel and threats against the Hamas government for its poor performance in transforming the political system to the dictates of Islam. The challenge, at present is albeit limited. Much to their chagrin, Hamas has continued to contain and repress their Islamist opponents, "many of us have been imprisoned by Hamas. Their oppressive measures are ongoing," states one Jaljalat jihadi leader in Gaza.<sup>58</sup> Yet it is unlikely that this Islamist opposition will wither away and in the current regional climate of resurgent Islamism including the salafi and salafi-jihadi variety the political criticism they lay at Hamas's door cannot be ignored.

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<sup>1</sup> Yahya Mousa, Change and Reform PLC member, author interview, Gaza City, 8 December 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Kidnappings including IDF soldier Gilad Shalit who was released in a prisoner exchange negotiated by Hamas and Israel with Egyptian mediation in October 2011, British journalist Alan Johnston, and the murder of Italian activists Vittorio Arrigoni in April 2011.

<sup>3</sup> UN OCHA, Easing the Blockade, Assessing the humanitarian impact on the population of the Gaza Strip, UNOCHA, March 2011

[http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_special\\_easing\\_the\\_blockade\\_2011\\_03\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_easing_the_blockade_2011_03_english.pdf) accessed 13 December 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, Salafi Jihad, author interview, Gaza City 9 December 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Mahmoud Zahar, Hamas founder, author interview, Gaza City, 8 December 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Dr Jamal Abu Hashem, Hamas leader, authority interview, Gaza City, 23 January 2007.

<sup>7</sup> The Ikhwan al-Muslimeen, The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928. The Hamas movement considers itself a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. In its founding Covenant of August 1988 Hamas describes themselves as a link in the chain of the Muslim Brotherhood.

<sup>8</sup> Z. Abu Amr, Islamic fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Bloomington Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994.

<sup>9</sup> See: Are Hovdenak, "al-Qaeda – A challenge for Hamas?" January 2009, International Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) or D. Gold, Ties between al Qaeda and Hamas in Mideast are long and frequent / It shouldn't be any surprise that the two groups share ideology, Sfgate.com [http://articles.sfgate.com/2006-03-05/opinion/17286102\\_1\\_hamas-posters-qaeda-new-hamas-government](http://articles.sfgate.com/2006-03-05/opinion/17286102_1_hamas-posters-qaeda-new-hamas-government) accessed 13 December 2011

<sup>10</sup> C. Hellmich, Al-Qaeda – terrorists, hypocrites, fundamentalists? The view from within, Third World Quarterly, vol. 26:1, 2005, p. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Palestine, it is contended, and the issue of Israel's occupation had preoccupied jihadi thinkers and by extension al-Qaeda. See: B. Lia, Al Qaida's appeal: Understanding its unique selling points, Perspectives on Terrorism, vol. 2:8, (May) 2008, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/44/html>

<sup>12</sup> Usama bin Laden called for jihad against Israel in an audio message posted on the internet January 14, 2009. In the message, which is entitled "A Call for Jihad to Stop the Aggression on Gaza," bin Laden called on the "Muslim nation" to defeat the "Zionist entity" and assured the Palestinians that Al Qaeda's "fate is tied to yours in fighting the crusader-Zionist coalition, in fighting until victory or martyrdom." He also stated that "the duty is to urge people to jihad and to enlist the youth into jihad brigades."

<sup>13</sup> Y. Schweitzer, The terrorism threat against Israel from al-Qaeda and Global Jihad, Military and Strategic Affairs, vol. 2:1, June 2010, pp. 21-28.

<sup>14</sup> C. Reuter, My life is a weapon, a modern history of suicide bombing, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> S. Farrell, Palestinian militants deny suspicions of involvement; terror in America, The Times, 12 September 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Quintan Victorowicz and John Kaltner (2003), "Killing in the name of Islam: Al-Qaeda's justifications of



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September 11", *Middle East Policy*, vol X, no. 2, pp. 76–77. The undersigned, leaders of Islamic movements, are horrified by the events of Tuesday 11 September 2001 in the United States, which resulted in massive killing, destruction and attack on innocent lives. We express our deepest sympathies and sorrow. We condemn, in the strongest terms, the incidents, which are against all human and Islamic norms. This is grounded in the Noble Laws of Islam, which forbid all forms of attacks on innocents. God Almighty says in the Holy Quran: "No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another" (Surah al-Isra 17:15).<sup>6</sup> Signatories included the general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, the amir of the Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan and Ahmad Yassin, the founder of Hamas.

<sup>17</sup> P. Reeves, Sharon appeals to America not to "appease" Arabs, *The Independent*, 5 October 2001.

<sup>18</sup> B. Riedel, Al-Qaeda strikes back, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86:3, 2007, pp.

<sup>19</sup> Ehud Sprinzak quoted in B. Milton-Edwards and S. Farrell, *Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement*, Cambridge: Polity, 2010, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup> See: K. Amayreh, Hamas and al-Qaida: the Prospects for Radicalization in the Occupied Territories, Conflicts Forum, 2007, <http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Hamas-and-al-Qaeda-monograph.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> See: Zawahiri: Palestinian Elections Futile, Only Jihad Will End Occupation, *VOA News*, 20 December 2006, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2006/12/sec-061220-voa01.htm> (accessed 12 December 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Sheikh Hamed Beitawi, Head of Palestine Scholars Association, Nablus, author interview, 4 May 2007.

<sup>23</sup> S. Roy, *Hamas and civil society in Gaza, engaging the Islamist social sector*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> M. Moran, 'Hamastan' takes shape on the Gaza Strip, *Council on Foreign Relations Analysis Brief*, 17 June 2007, <http://www.cfr.org/israel/hamastan-takes-shape-gaza-strip/p13584> accessed 19 December 2011.

<sup>25</sup> The monopoly of force by the PA is constantly tested by Israel's security demands under the terms of the Oslo Agreement 1993.

<sup>26</sup> Mohammad, Shatti Refugee Camp resident, author interview, Gaza City, 16 July 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Mushir al-Masri, Change and reform MP, author interview, Beit Lahiya, 16 July 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Y. Sayigh, Hamas rule in Gaza: Three Years on, *Crown Center for Middle East Studies*, no. 41, march 2010, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous Jaljalat Leader, author interview, Gaza City, 9 December 2011.

<sup>30</sup> Hamas statement issued 14 June 2007 to author.

<sup>31</sup> Sheikh Yassin al-Astal, author interview, Khan Yunis, 2 July 2008.

<sup>32</sup> Author notes from incident, 6 May 2007

<sup>33</sup> Daa Hadid, 6 May 2007, *Associated Press*, report.

<sup>34</sup> Sheikh Ibrahim al-Astal, Gaza City, author interview, 15 May 2007

<sup>35</sup> Sheikh Mohammed, Gaza city, author interview, 8 December 2011.

<sup>36</sup> Sheikh Mohammed, Gaza city, author interview, 15 May 2007

<sup>37</sup> Sheikh Hassan, Rafah, author interview 25 July 2007

<sup>38</sup> Anonymous salafi leader, Gaza city, author interview, 26 July 2007

<sup>39</sup> Sheikh Sa'ad Sharaf, author interview, Nablus, 4 May 2007

<sup>40</sup> Sheikh Sa'ad Sharaf, author interview, Nablus, 4 May 2007

<sup>41</sup> See J. Brachman, *Global Jihadism, Theory and Practice*, London: Routledge, 2009

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous Jaljalat Leader, author interview, Gaza City, 9 December 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, Rock Caffe Net, author interview, Gaza City, 16 July 2008,

<sup>44</sup> International Crisis Group, Radical Islam in Gaza. *Crisis Group Middle East Report* N°104, 29 March 2011.

<sup>45</sup> Anonymous Jaljalat Leader, author interview, Gaza City, 9 December 2011

<sup>46</sup> May 2006 Communiqué

<sup>47</sup> Preventive Security Official, author interview, Gaza city, 20 June 2006

<sup>48</sup> The family had elements which displayed partisan tendencies to both Fatah and Hamas. Its relations with the latter broke down and became envenomed. Hence the Army of Islam also became part of a family feud with Hamas governing powers. One family elder, Abu Khatab Doghmush defiantly declared "our rivalry is with Hamas" and that rivalry ended with a defeat when Hamas laid siege to the family compound killing family members in July 2007. Abu Khatab Doghmush, author interview, Gaza city, 15 May 2007.

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- <sup>49</sup> See: <http://news.sky.com/home/world-news/article/15908607> and <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/05/163838.htm> accessed 20 December 2011.
- <sup>50</sup> See: Minbar of Tawhed and Jihad <http://www.tawhed.net/n.php>
- <sup>51</sup> Mr Azzam Abu Baqr, Fatah Central Committee Member, author interview, Ramallah, 10 May 2011
- <sup>52</sup> See: Palestinian Ministry of Interior Announcement, Gaza City, 12 December 2011  
<http://www.almoltaqa.ps/english/showthread.php?t=21549> accessed 15 December 2011
- <sup>53</sup> Yahya Mousa, Change and Reform PLC member, author interview, Gaza City, 8 December 2011.
- <sup>54</sup> "Abu Hafs", Salafi-Jihad leader, author interview, Gaza City, 15 July 2008
- <sup>55</sup> Dr Mahmoud Zahar, Hamas founder, author interview, Gaza City, 8 December 2011.
- <sup>56</sup> Dr Mohammad Awad, Hamas Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Planning, author interview, Gaza City, 8 December 2011.
- <sup>57</sup> Anonymous Jaljalat Leader, author interview, Gaza City, 9 December 2011.
- <sup>58</sup> Anonymous Jaljalat Leader, author interview, Gaza City, 9 December 2011.